

Each time you visit a hospital, physician, or other healthcare provider, a record of your visit is made. Typically, this record contains your symptoms, examination and test results, diagnoses, treatment, a plan for future care or treatment and billing-related information. This notice applies to all of the records of your care generated by the county, whether made by county personnel or agents of the county.

### **Our Responsibilities:**

We are required by law to maintain the privacy of your health information and provide you a description of our privacy practices. We will abide by the terms of this notice.

### **Uses and Disclosures:**

#### How we may use and disclose Health Information about you.

The following categories describe examples of the way we use and disclose health information:

**For Treatment:** We may use health information about you to provide you treatment or services. We may disclose health information about you to doctors, nurses, technicians, health students, or other county personnel who are involved in your care. For example: a doctor treating you for a broken leg may need to know if you have diabetes because diabetes may slow the healing process. Different departments of the county also may share health information about you in order to coordinate the different things you may need, such as prescriptions, lab work, and x-rays.

We may also provide your physician or a subsequent healthcare provider with copies of various reports that should assist him or her in treating you once you are no longer using the services of the county.

**For Payment:** We may use and disclose health information about your treatment and services to bill and collect payment from you, your insurance company or a third party payer. For example, we may need to give your insurance company information about your visit so they will pay us or reimburse you for the treatment. We may also tell your health plan about treatment you are going to receive to determine whether your plan will cover it.

**For Health Care Operations:** Members of the medical staff and/or quality improvement team may use information in your health record to assess the care and outcomes in your case and others like it. The results will then be used to continually improve the quality of care for all patients we

serve. For example, we may also combine health information about many patients to evaluate the need for new services or treatment. We may disclose information to doctors, nurses, and other students for educational purposes. And we may combine health information we have with that of other counties to see where we can make improvements. We may remove information that identifies you from this set of health information to protect your privacy.

We may also use and disclose health information:

- To business associates we have contracted with to perform the agreed upon service and billing for it;
- To remind you that you have an appointment for medical care;
- To assess your satisfaction with our services;
- To tell you about possible treatment alternatives;
- To tell you about health-related benefits or services;
- To contact you as part of fund-raising efforts;
- To inform Funeral Directors consistent with applicable law;
- For population-based activities relating to improving health or reducing health care costs; and
- For conducting training programs or reviewing competence of healthcare professionals.

**Business Associates:** There are some services provided in our organization through contracts with business associates. Examples include certain laboratory tests. When these services are contracted, we may disclose your health information to our business associate so that they can perform the job we've asked them to do and bill you or your third-party payer for services rendered. To protect your health information, forever, we require the business associate to appropriately safeguard your information.

**Individuals Involved in Your Care or Payment for Your Care:** We may release health information about you to a friend or family member who is involved in your medical care or who helps pay for your care. In addition, we may disclose health information about you to an entity assisting in a disaster relief effort so that your family can be notified about your condition, status and location.

**Research:** We may disclose information to researchers when an institutional review board that has reviewed the research proposal and established protocols to ensure the privacy of your health information has approved their research.

**Future Communications:** We may communicate to you via newsletters, mailouts or other means regarding treatment options, health related information, disease-management programs, wellness programs, or other community based initiatives or activities our facility is participating in.

**Affiliated Covered Entity:** Protected health information will be made available to personnel at local affiliated hospitals as necessary to carry out treatment, payment and health care operations. Caregivers at other facilities may have access to protected health information at their locations to assist in reviewing past treatment information as it may affect treatment at this time. Please contact the Yadkin County Privacy Officer for further information on the specific sites included in the affiliated covered entity.

**As required by law,** we may also use and disclose health information for the following types of entities, including but not limited to:

- uses and disclosures required by law
- uses and disclosures for public health activities
- disclosure about victims of abuse, neglect or domestic violence
- uses and disclosures for health oversight activities
- disclosures for judicial and administrative proceedings
- disclosures for law enforcement purposes
- uses and disclosures about decedents
- uses and disclosures for cadaveric organ, eye or tissue donation
- uses and disclosures for research purposes
- uses and disclosures to avert a serious threat to health or safety
- uses and disclosures for specialized government functions

**State Specific Requirements:** When North Carolina state law is more stringent than federal privacy laws, the state law preempts the federal law.

### **You Health Information Rights**

Although your health record is the physical property of the healthcare practitioner or facility that compiled it, you have the **Right to:**

- **Inspect and Copy:** You have the right to inspect and obtain a copy of the health information that may be used to make decisions about your care. Usually, this includes medical and billing records, but does not include psychotherapy notes. We may deny your

request to inspect and copy in certain very limited circumstances. If you are denied access to health information, you may request that the denial be reviewed. Another licensed health care professional chosen by the county will review your request and the denial. The person conducting the review will not be the person who denied your request. We will comply with the outcome of the review.

- **Amend:** If you feel that health information we have about you is incorrect or incomplete, you may ask us to amend the information. You have the right to request an amendment for as long as the information is kept by or for the county. We may deny your request for an amendment and if this occurs, you will be notified of the reason for the denial.
- **An Accounting of Disclosures:** You have the right to request an accounting of disclosures. This is a list of certain disclosures we make of your health information for purposes other than treatment, payment or health care operations.
- **Request Restrictions:** You have the right to request a restriction or limitation on the health information we use or disclose about you for treatment, payment or health care operations. You also have the right to request a limit on the health information we disclose about you to someone who is involved in your care or the payment for your care, like a family member or friend. For example, you could ask that we not use or disclose information about a treatment you had.  
**We are not required to agree to your request.** If we do agree, we will comply with your request unless the information is needed to provide you emergency treatment.
- **Request Confidential Communications:** You have the right to request that we communicate with you about medical matters in a certain way or at a certain location. For example, you can ask that we contact you at work or by U.S. Mail. The county will grant requests for confidential communications at alternative locations and/or via alternative means only if the request is submitted in writing and the written request includes a mailing address where the individual will receive bills for services rendered by the facility and related correspondence regarding payment for services. Please realize, we reserve the right to contact you by other means and at other locations if you fail to respond to any communication from us that requires a response. We will notify you in accordance with your original request prior to attempting to contact you by other means or at another location.

- **A Paper Copy of This Notice:** You have the right to a paper copy of this notice. You may ask us to give you a copy of this notice at any time. Even if you have agreed to receive this notice electronically, you are still entitled to a paper copy of this notice.

To exercise any of your rights, please obtain the required forms from the Privacy Officer and submit your request in writing.

#### **Changes to this Notice**

We reserve the right to change this notice and the revised or changed notice will be effective for information we already have about you as well as any information we receive in the future. The current notice will be posted in the county and include the effective date.

#### **Complaints**

If you believe your privacy rights have been violated, you may file a complaint with the county by contacting the main number and asking for the County Privacy Officer or contact:

Region IV, Office for Civil Rights  
US Department of Health and Human Services  
Atlanta Federal Center  
61 Forsyth Street, SW, Suite 3B70  
Atlanta, GA 30303-8909  
Voice Phone (404) 562-7886  
FAX (404) 562-7881  
TDD (404) 331-2867.

All complaints must be submitted in writing. You will not be penalized by filing a complaint.

#### **Other Uses of Health Information**

Other uses and disclosures of health information not covered by this notice or the laws that apply to us will be made only with your written permission. If you provide us permission to use or disclose health information about you, you may revoke that permission, in writing, at any time. If you revoke your permission, we will no longer use or disclose health information about you for the reasons covered by your written authorization. You understand that we are unable to take back any disclosures we have already made with your permission, and that we are required to retain our records of the care that we provided to you and documented in the office or clinic.

# NOTICE OF PRIVACY PRACTICES

Effective Date: April 14, 2003



This notice describes how health information about you may be used and disclosed and how you can get access to this information. Please review it carefully.

If you have any questions about this notice, please contact the County Privacy Officer.

Yadkin County Privacy Officer  
P.O. Box 146  
Yadkinville, NC - 27055

Phone: (336) 679-4200